# EASTER WITH PAREPA.

BY MYRA S. DELANO.

WEN Parepa was over re she was everynere the people's dol. The great opera houses in all our cities and towns were thronged. There were none to criticise or carp. Her young, rich, grand voice was beyond compare. Its glorious tones are remembered with an enthusiasm like that which greeted her when she sang.

Her company played in New York during the Easter holidays, and I, as an old friend, claimed some of her leisure hours. We were friends in Italy, and this Easter day was to be spent with me.

At 11 in the morning she sang at one of the large churches. I waited for her and at last we two were alone in my snug little rooms. At noon the sky was overcast and gray. Down came the snow, whitening the streets and roofs. The wind swept icy breaths from the water as it came up from the bay, and rushed past the city spires, and over tall buildings, whirling around us the snow and storm.

We had hurried home, shut and fastened our blinds, drawn close the curtains and piled coal higher on the glowing grate. We had taken off our wraps and now sat close to the cheery fire for a whole afternoon's blessed enjoyment.

Parepa said: "Mary, this is perfect rest! We shall be quite alone for four hours."

"Yes, four long hours!" I replied. "No rehearsals, no engagements. Nobody knows where you are! If the whole company died they couldn't let you know!"

Parepa laughed merrily at this idea.

"Dinner shall be served in this room, and I won't allow even the servant to look at you!" I said.

She clasped her dimpled hands together, like a child in enjoyment, and then sprang up to roll the little centre-table nearer the grate. "This is a better fire than we have at home," she said. "Do you remember the scalding that day when I took you to our museum, and you made great fun of our 'pot of coals?'"

"Yes, and how absurd your Italian fires are? I almost perished."

Parepa leaned her head back against the chair and said in a low voice: "Mary, that was a good Sunday in Venice, when my faithful old Luiza rowed us around to St. Mark's to early mass, and—"

"Oh! how lovely it was," I interrupted. "It seemed like a dream—how we slipped through the little canal under the Bridge of Sighs, then walked through the court yard of the Doge's palace into the great solemn shadows of St. Mark's. I shall never forget the odor of the incense, and the robed priests, and the slow intonings. Such crowds of people, all kneeling!"

Parepa looked intently into my eyes and softly laughed in her queer little Italian way. "And," she went on, "then you took me to your church where your priest read a song out of a book, and the men and women were very sober looking and sang so slow, why I can sing that little song now. I have never forgotten it."

Parepa folded her hands exactly like the Scotch Presbyterian folk of the small English church in Venice on the Grand canal, and sang slowly one verse of our old hymn, "When all thy mercies, oh my God," to the old tune of "Canaan."

"How everybody stared at you when you joined in and sang," I said.

The snow had now turned into sleet, a great chill fell over the whole city. We looked out of our windows, peeping through the shutters, and pitying the people as they rushed past.

A sharp rap on my door. John thrust in a note.

My Dear Friend—Can you come? Annie has gone. She said you would be sure to come to her funeral. She spoke of you to the last. She will be buried at 4.

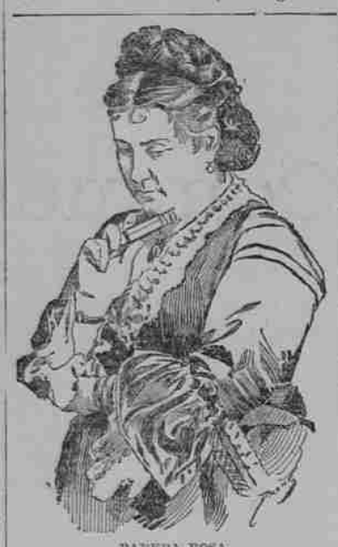
I laid the poor little blotted note in Parepa's hand. How it stormed! We looked into each other's faces, helplessly. I said: "Dear, I must go; but you sit by the fire and rest. I'll be at home in two hours. And poor Annie has gone!"

"Tell me about it, Mary, for I am going with you," she answered.

She threw on her heavy cloak, wound her long white wool scarf closely about her throat, drew on her woolen gloves, and we set out together in the wild Easter storm.

Annie's mother was a dressmaker, and sewed for me and my friends. She was left a widow when her one little girl was 5 years old. Her husband was drowned off the Jersey coast, and out of blinding pain and loss and anguish had grown a sort of idolatry for the delicate, beautiful child whose brown eyes looked like the young husband's.

For fifteen years this mother had loved and worked for Annie, her whole being going out to bless her one child. I had grown fond of them; and in small ways, with books and flowers, outings and



PAREPA ROSA.

simple pleasures, I had made myself dear to them. The end of the delicate girl's life had not seemed so near, though her doom had been hovering about her for years.

I had thought it all over as I took the Easter lilies from my window shelf, and wrapped them in thick papers and hid them out of the storm under my cloak. I knew there would be no other flowers in their wretched room. How endless was the way to this east side tenement house! No elevated roads, no rapid transits across the great city then, as there are now. At last we reached the place. On the street stood the canvas covered hearse, known only to the poor.

We climbed flight after flight of narrow dark stairs to the small upper rooms. In the middle of the floor stood a stained coffin, lined with stiff rattling cambric and cheap gauze, resting on uncovered trestles of wood.

We each took the mother's hand and stood a moment with her, silent. All hope had gone out of he face. She shed no tears, but as I held her cold hand, I felt a shudder go over her, but she neither spoke nor sobbed.

The driving storm had made us late, and the plain, hard-working people sat stiffly against the walls. Some one gave us chairs and we sat close to the mother.

The minister came in, a blunt hard-looking man, self-sufficient and formal. A woman said the undertaker brought him. Icier than the pitiless storm outside, yes, colder than ice were his words. He read a few verses from the Bible, and warned "the bereaved mother against rebellion at the divine decrees." He made a prayer and was gone.

A dreadful hush fell over the small room. I whispered to the mother and asked, "Why did you wait so long to send for me? All this would have been defferent."

With a kind of stare she looked at me. "I can't remember why I did'nt send," she said, her hand to her head, and added: "I seemed to die, too, and forget, till they brought a coffin. Then I knew it all."

The undertaker came and bustled about. He looked at myself and Parepa, as if to say: "It's time to go." The wretched funeral service was over.

Without a word Parepa rose and walked to the head of the coffin. She laid her white scarf on an empty chair, threw her cloak back from her shoulders, where it fell in long, soft, black lines from her noble figure like the drapery of mourning. She laid her soft, fair hand on the cold forehead, passed it tenderly over the wasted, delicate face, looked down at the dead girl a moment, and moved my Easter lilies from the stained box to the thin fingers, then lifted up her head, and with illumined eyes sang the glorious melody:

"Angels ever bright and fair,
Take, oh, take her to thy care."

Her magnificent voice rose and fell in all its richness and power and pity and beauty! She looked above the dingy room and the tired faces of the men and women, the hard hands and the struggling hearts. She threw back her head and sang till the choirs of paradise must have paused to listen to the Easter music of that day.

She passed her hand caressingly over the girl's soft dark hair, and sang on—and on—"Take—oh, take her to thy care!"

The mother's face grew rapt and white. I held her hands and watched her eyes. Suddenly she threw my hand off and knelt at Parepa's feet, close to the wooden trestles. She locked her fingers together, tears and sobs breaking forth. She prayed aloud that God would bless the angel singing for Annie. A patient smile settled about her lips, the light came back into the poor dulled eyes, and she kissed her daughter's face with a love beyond all interpretation or human speech. I led her back to her seat, as the last glorious notes of Parepa's voice rose triumphant over all earthly pain and sorrow.

And I thought that no queen ever went to her grave with a greater ceremony than this young daughter of poverty and toil, committed to the care of all angels.

That same night thousands listened to Parepa's matchless voice. Applause rose to the skies and Parepa's own face was gloriously swept with emotion. I joined in the enthusiasm, but above the glitter and shimmering of jewels and dress, and the heavy odors of Easter flowers, the sea of smiling faces and the murmur of voices, I could only behold by the dim light of a tenement window the singer's uplifted face, the wondering countenances of the poor on-lookers, and the mother's wide, startled, tearful eyes; I could only hear above the sleet on the roof and the storm outside Parepa's voice singing up to heaven: "Take, oh take her to thy care!"

Somebody in a loud whisper said in the seat beside me: "Did you hear Parepa sing 'Lo! the herald angels,' in church this morning?"

I answered to myself, rather than to her, "I heard a glorious voice beside the dead!"

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The highest salary drawn by a diplomatist is that of M. Waddington, the French ambassador to London. His salary is $80,000 a year, besides which he has a large private income.

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In Albany, N. Y., about 1814, the first carriages were made, all previously used having been imported from England.